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FM AMCONSUL LAGOS
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INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA 9030
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO 0105
RUEHWR/AMEMBASSY WARSAW 0468
RUEHCD/AMCONSUL CIUDAD JUAREZ 0447
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 0446
RUEHSO/AMCONSUL SAO PAULO 0424
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH AFB UK
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 LAGOS 000514

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/W, INR/AA, DS/IP/AF, DS/ICI/PII, DS/DSS/OSAC
WARSAW FOR LISA PIASCIK
CIUDAD JUAREZ FOR DONNA BLAIR
ISTANBUL FOR TASHAWNA SMITH
SAO PAULO FOR ANDREW WITHERSPOON
OSLO FOR HELENA SCHRADER
DOE FOR GPERSON, CAROLYN GAY
TREASURY FOR ASEVERENS, SRENENDER, DFIELD
COMMERCE FOR KBURRESS
STATE PASS USTR FOR ASST USTR FLISER
STATE PASS TRANSPORTATION FOR MARAD
STATE PASS OPIC FOR ZHAN AND MSTUCKART
STATE PASS TDA FOR NCABOT
STATE PASS EXIM FOR JRICHTER
STATE PASS USAID FOR GWEYNAND AND SLAWAETZ

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/19/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: MILITANT DELEGATION TO ASO ROCK JULY 19, RIVERS
CRIMINALS RENOUNCE VIOLENCE

REF: A. LAGOS 485

[1](#)B. LAGOS 502

[1](#)C. LAGOS 487

[1](#)D. LAGOS 310

[1](#)E. LAGOS 493

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Classified By: Acting Consul General Donald McConnell for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: On July 14, Niger Delta militants again met in Delta State and agreed to send a delegation to Aso Rock on July 19 to meet President Yar'Adua and Vice President Jonathan. In a separate but related move, Rivers militant/criminal leaders publicly renounced violence. The militants have decided approach the Federal Government before addressing state-specific grievances they may have. If arms dealer Henry Okah does not join the ceasefire, he has the capacity to arm new youths to fill the militants' void. End Summary.

Militants Prepare For Meeting with President, VP

[1](#)2. (C) On July 14, militant leaders met in Delta State to determine their strategy for dialogue with the government

about Niger Delta problems. The meeting was well-attended, Sheriff Mulade, President of the Gbaramatu Youth Council, told Poloff on July 16. Absent from the meeting were Ateke Tom, leader of the Icelanders Cult/Niger Delta Vigilantes, and criminal leader Soboma George, both of Rivers State (Ref A); both sent delegates in their stead, Mulade said. George's representative agreed that any decision taken by the militant leaders in Delta State would bind George's group. All participating militants agreed that if any one of the "front-line" militants chose to break the ceasefire or accept money from government to break it, the rest would no longer be obligated and the ceasefire over.

13. (C) Dokubo Asari met Vice President Goodluck Jonathan in Abuja on July 12 to request a meeting between the President and a seven person militant delegation on July 19. The purpose of the meeting will be to discuss ways forward on the Niger Delta, Mulade said. In preparation for the meeting with the President and Vice President, it was decided that Asari would lead the delegation, which will include the President of the Ijaw Youth Congress, Chris Ekiyor and Kingsley Otuaro, who was once General Secretary of the Federated Niger Delta Ijaw Communities (FNDIC) and former personal assistant to former Governor James Ibori of Delta State. Mulade said Tom Polo is the godfather of the militants in the creeks but, since he will not leave the creeks for meetings or negotiations, Asari will lead the delegation to Aso Rock.

14. (C) According to Dimieari Von Kemedi, Program Head of the NGO Our Niger Delta (OND), militant leaders need to speak with a united militant/Ijaw voice. Kemedi told Poloffs on July 14 that he has been asked to serve as the head of a committee to determine how the militant group (Ref B) can most effectively dialogue with government. If dialogue is

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not carefully orchestrated, the militants' message could be confused or weakened, Kemedi warned. (Bio Note: Kemedi and Vice President Goodluck Jonathan both hail from the Ogbia community in Bayelsa State. End Note.)

Rivers Leaders Also Renounce Violence

15. (C) Also on July 14, groups in Rivers State, which are commonly referred to as "cultist" groups that got their start when funded by politicians to support their campaigns, have in a separate but related move renounced violence. According to Mulade, the groups, which are led by Ateke Tom, did not coordinate with the Tom Polo/Dokubo Asari-led militants. Mulade speculated the group's stance was spurred by the militants' threat of "consequences" for any group or individual violating the ceasefire (Ref B).

16. (C) Mulade did not believe Ateke Tom or Soboma George were responsible for the recent spate of child kidnappings in Rivers State (Ref C). He said individuals responsible for these attacks were not organized in camps as are the militants and cultist groups. He stated the attacks were perpetrated by "criminal individuals." Mulade was not sure how these individuals could be stopped, but he thought there were "frantic moves" being undertaken and he was confident order would soon reign in Port Harcourt. (Note: Mulade did not comment whether these moves were by the government, the militants, or by cultists. End Note.)

Strategy: Address GON First, Then States

17. (C) Kemedi, who was invited to but unable to attend the July 14 militant meeting in Delta State, said the militants decided to approach the Federal government before requesting state governments to tackle problems in the region. This, he

averred, is because the federal government needs to be held responsible for the region and made to oversee future state government activities. If they were to approach both federal and state governments at the same time, the GON would swiftly task state governments and effectively pass the buck, Kemedi said. Kemedi is concerned, however, that militants are not sure what they want, and that many are merely "echoing what others say."

¶8. (C) Kemedi believed it was important for militants to envision "life after militia" and in this light, for each militant camp or sub-group to make sure his particular interests are addressed. For example, Tom Polo has long desired greater Ijaw control of the local government area in Warri, Delta State which is currently Itsekiri dominated (Ref D), Kemedi said. Other camps articulate their interests in varying ways, from resource allocation to local government control to Nigerianization of and local content in the oil industry. Kemedi thought individual and community participation in the oil economy, whether as owners or workers in chemical supply firms, construction contractors, or caterers, was more important to militants and communities

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than resource control. A substantial road block to Ijaws being hired by international oil companies (IOCs), he said, is that Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa employees dominate management positions and do not facilitate hiring outside their ethnic group. (Comment: Nigeria is a country where patrimony and tribal roots still play a large role in preferential treatment. End Comment.)

¶9. (C) Kemedi was not sure how militant leaders would prioritize and present their needs to the federal government, but he appeared confident his committee would be able to work out these questions. One potential approach to resolving the "life after militia" problem could be to employ militants in government public works and development projects. Kemedi also saw possible livelihoods for militants interested in feeding and producing for their communities in agricultural production. However, Kemedi was quick to point out that he did not envision IOCs hiring the militants themselves but rather reaching out to skilled and capable individuals from Ijaw communities.

Arms Dealer Henry Okah

¶10. (C) Arms dealer Henry Okah, known in the creeks as Master and as Jomo Gbomo online and in public pronouncements, is a powerful individual whom the militant leaders would like to see join the dialogue with government. While Okah's participation would present a united Ijaw front, Kemedi said Okah and Polo would need first to resolve problems between them. According to Kemedi, Tom Polo disapproves of Okah's alias "Master" because it connotes a status higher than that of "Commander," adopted by other Ijaw militant leaders. Despite their differences, Kemedi said Polo respected Okah for his contributions to the Ijaw movement. Okah provided rocket launchers and other weapons with which militants were able to engage the military, withstand assaults, and decrease military patrols in the creeks.

¶11. (C) Okah's participation in negotiations is key because he controls arms and people through which he could perpetuate unrest in the region, Kemedi said. Okah, who Kemedi believes is in South Africa, has not joined the militants' meetings, but Kemedi was hopeful he would agree to lay down his arms once he sees future economic and other opportunities. Kemedi has recently begun direct email correspondence with Okah and is hopeful he can persuade Okah to join the militants' efforts.

¶12. (C) Kemedi discovered that the South African government had been ready to arrest Okah, but that President Obasanjo

asked them not to do it. According to Kemedi, Okah's location had been identified and the government ready to move when Obasanjo asked to have the operation halted.

Comment

¶13. (C) Mulade and Kemedi provide a rare first hand look at

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militant deliberations over how to resolve the Niger Delta crisis racking their communities. Kemedi's coherent and practicable set of objectives or implementing strategies is predictable in light of the poverty and lack of education in the region. Hopefully the government will meet the militants more than half way with honest dialogue, funded development plans and other elements that will turn the militants' temporary ceasefire to a permanent one. End Comment.
MCCONNELL